

Town of Linwood
(Town of Leedsville)
New Jersey Coastal Heritage Trail
County Road 585, South of Northfield
Linwood
Atlantic County
New Jersey

HABS No. NJ-1039

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WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of Interior
Washington, D.C. 20013-7127

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

TOWN OF LINWOOD (Town of Leedsville)

HABS No. NJ-1039

Location: New Jersey Coastal Heritage Trail, County Road 585, South of Northfield, Linwood, Atlantic County, New Jersey.

Significance: Linwood, originally called Leedsville, was first settled by Quakers in the mid-eighteenth century. The town is representative of the early eighteenth-century bay town, which grew up along Shore Road, the main transportation artery prior to the railroad. Today Linwood is one of a string of mainland suburbs to Atlantic City.

History: The area originally called Leedsville, and later Linwood, located south of Northfield, was the site of an early Quaker Meeting House. The log building was built in 1759 on the east side of the Shore Road. The church, and the Quakers, are long gone, but the cemetery still remains. At some point, ship captains began moving into the area, and the Quakers started moving out. In 1860, the Central Methodist church was built next to the Quaker cemetery. A sea captain, John Walker Tilton, was the driving force behind the establishment of this church. He is quoted as saying, "what we need to make this place more permanent, is a church, centrally located, that will welcome seamen from the yards and docks of Bakersville, Leedsville and the Point."¹ By the mid-1800s, Leedsville was home to at least three shipbuilders, five merchants, a hotel keeper, a physician, and a daguerreotype artist.²

Beer's map of 1872 showed Leedsville to have two churches (Methodist and Presbyterian), a school, a hotel, and a clustering of houses along Shore Road and what are today Oak and West Avenues. The same map also contains "Business Notices" for Egg Harbor Township, probably not an accurate record of active businesses at the time, since the notices were probably paid for by the subscribers, nonetheless, it is a valuable list. Five Sea Captains were mentioned: Jos. Merritt, R. L. Somers, J. D. Sanders, John Townsend and Henry H. Van Sant. Jos. Kerns was described as a "Dealer in Dry Goods, Groceries &c. Agent Averill's Patent Paint." There was a Carpenter and Builder, Jos. R. Risley, a General Blacksmith, Jos. Steelman, and a Surveyor and Conveyancer, David B. Somers. Another Somers, J. B., was the town Physician and Surgeon.³

The name Leedsville is said to have derived from Leed's Store, a village landmark. When Leedsville applied for a post office in the late nineteenth century, the name had to be changed to avoid confusion with another Leedsville, New Jersey. The name Linwood was chosen, and the post office was established in 1880. Linwood was

¹ Gladys J. Kuhlman, A History of Linwood, New Jersey, (Linwood, NJ: 1965), n.p.

² Kirkbride, "New Jersey Directory of 1850" in Atlantic County Historical Society Yearbook 9 (October 1980), 17-19.

³ Beers, F. W. "Topographical Map of Atlantic County, New Jersey." (Philadelphia: Beers, Comstock and Cline, 1872).

incorporated as a borough in 1889, and later as a city in 1931.⁴ Today, one of several mainland suburbs of Atlantic City, Linwood is characterized by a series of professional buildings and malls along Route 9. The old downtown has been lost in modern shopping centers such as Central Square and Linwood Green, an attempt at "colonial village" intimacy within easy reach of both highway and bank machine. A suburban community with the necessary number of conveniences concentrated outside its growing neighborhoods, Linwood suffers from its success; traffic congestion slows circulation despite the proximity of stores and services. Though the brick City Hall and streamlined Mainland Regional High School follow a low, residential roofline, the pressures of development have obscured such attempts at architectural uniformity.

Prepared by: Camille Gatz
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- Sources: Beers, F. W. "Topographical Map of Atlantic County, New Jersey." Philadelphia: Beers, Comstock and Cline, 1872.
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⁴ William McMahon, Historic South Jersey Towns (Atlantic City: Press Publishing Co., 1964), 60-61; John L. Kay and Chester M. Smith, Jr. New Jersey Postal History (Lawrence, MA: Quarterman Publications, Inc., 1977), 28; John P. Snyder, The Story of New Jersey's Civil Boundaries: 1606-1968 (Trenton: Bureau of Geology and Topography, 1969), 69.

Project Information:

This project was sponsored by the New Jersey Coastal Heritage Trail (NJCHT) of the National Park Service, Janet Wolf, director. The documentation was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS), Robert Kapsch, chief, under the direction of HABS historian Sara Amy Leach, project supervisor. Three historians completed the research during summer 1991: Field supervisor Sarah Allaback (Massachusetts Institute of Technology), Alfred Holden (University of Vermont), and Camille Gatza (North Carolina). David Ames (University of Delaware) made the large-format photographs. Historian, Elizabeth Harris May (George Washington University), edited the HABS reports.